

Kedzie (R. C.)

Circular to the members, of the
section on state medicine and public
hygiene, of the American medical asso.

[The water supply as related to
public health]



Circular

TO THE MEMBERS OF THE SECTION ON STATE MEDICINE AND PUBLIC HYGIENE OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION :

GENTLEMEN :—In entering upon the duties assigned us as members of this Section, the question arises, What subject for investigation shall claim our labors for this year?

The example set by my predecessors would seem to make it my duty to propose some line of special investigation in order to concentrate the work of this Section. While the members of other Sections are left to select their own topics, and to bring before their respective Sections any subject they elect, this Section is formed in a peculiar manner, and its work is of such a kind as will elicit results of greater value when its efforts are concentrated upon some one subject. The field of State Medicine and Public Hygiene is so vast, and the results to be reached partake so largely of the statistical element, that I offer no apology for following the example of my predecessors.

Dr. Bell, the first Chairman of this Section, proposed to the Section the important subject of Drainage as related to public health. I ask the members of the Section to take up a subject which might very properly follow in the order of investigation, viz : The water-supply as related to public health.

This subject is so intimately connected with the health of the whole people, is a matter often receiving no adequate consideration, and is so often the cause of fatal sickness, or of chronic ill-health to large masses of our people, that it should command the early and earnest attention of this Section.

It may be objected that this subject has already received very thorough consideration by leading scientific men and in highly educated communities. This is true, but it does not close the field to this Section. The legitimate field of our work is not alone to develop original fields of investigation, but to consider the conditions which unfavorably affect the health of the great mass. The water-supply of great cities is a subject of great importance; the conditions which affect the water-supply of rural districts are no less important.

I ask the members of the Section, therefore, to take up the subject potable water, and water for culinary use, under the following topics :

- 1°. Water-supply as affected by geological formation, including the rock formations, influence of different kinds of soils, depth of water-supply, etc.
- 2°. Influence of rain-fall and of drought upon the purity of the water.
- 3°. Contamination of water by decomposing vegetable matter (influence of swamps, etc.), by decomposing animal matter (fecal matter, influence of graveyards, etc.,) and sewage contamination of streams.
- 4°. Spread of contagious diseases by water contamination.
- 5°. Water-supply of cities.

In treating these topics, it is desirable that the members, as far as possible, collect the facts that are to be found in their respective fields of inquiry, with cases of unusual sickness or other results connected with the water-supply. By thus calling the attention of persons in all parts of our country to causes of danger which are at work in their own vicinity, much good may be accomplished by removing the causes of a large amount of sickness.

By calling attention to one field of inquiry, the Chairman disclaims any intention of excluding other subjects if the members desire to introduce them. Any article on other subjects to be read before the Section should be forwarded to the Secretary, Ezra M. Hunt, M. D., Metuchen, N. J., one month before the meeting of the Section.

In the "Plan of Organization" it is provided that "the Section on State Medicine and Public Hygiene shall be composed of one member from each State, representing as far as practicable the State Board of Health." One prime condition of advancing State Medicine and Public Hygiene is the organization of a State Board of Health in every State. A very large number of the States have no State Board of Health. The Chairman would respectfully but earnestly urge the members of this Section to use their best efforts to secure the early organization of such a Board in their respective States. It is a duty laid upon them by virtue of their representative position as members of this Section.

In order that the results of investigations made by the several members of this Section may be combined into one general report for the consideration of the Section at its meeting, you are requested to make a report of your work on this subject, and forward the same to me by the 1st of April, 1876.

R. C. KEDZIE, M. D.,

LANSING, Michigan, August 5, 1875.

Chairman of Section on State Medicine and Public Hygiene.



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